DECEMBER, 1958

# The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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*Andrew J. Bandstra*

THE PERFECTION OF GOD
*James Daane*

SURE IDEALISM
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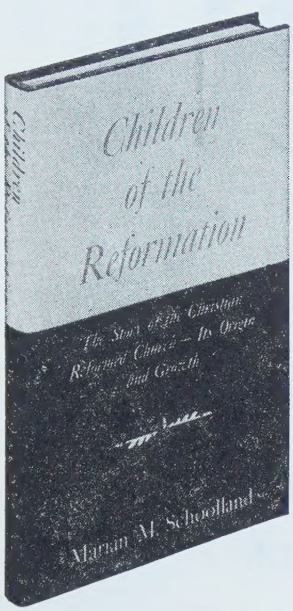


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# The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

## *A Christmas Meditation*

*"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich."*

II Corinthians 8:9

JESUS once reminded His followers: "And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much." To give and expect to get in return is nothing according to Christ's standards. Much rather we should love, do good to and lend to our enemies — those from whom we expect nothing in return.

For this reason Christmas time is a unique time. It is the season in which we who have give to those who have not, without thinking of return. Institutions of mercy realize this and so the mail is flooded with letters of appeal to help those less fortunate than others. And this appeal gets response. Such giving creates the atmosphere of good feeling, for it breathes the spirit of "good-will toward men."

Yet such giving is but an adumbration of the real Gift of Christmas as expressed in the text above. For this giving without expecting to get does not usually involve us (the giver, the rich) in a total identification with those who receive (the poor). We give of our abundance and retain the status of giver; the poor is helped in his poverty but still remains poor. It was not thus with the Lord Jesus Christ who became the Babe of Bethlehem. He was rich but He *became* poor. He did not merely give of His riches, but He gave *Himself*. He was both Giver and Gift. In His giving, the Giver became identified with the recipient. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider, too, the vastness of the riches which He left behind and the deepness of the poverty which He assumed. (The Corinthians knew this; Paul merely calls it to mind.) In His pre-existing state of "being on an equality with God," the Lord Jesus shared in the glory of the Godhead. While on earth He, the Son, once prayed for the restoration of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was. A hymn-writer, depending on Psalm 45, describes it in terms of ivory palaces and of garments which smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. The seer on Patmos describes the new glory as that which is without curse, without darkness, without sin, without death, without pain, and without tears. All of this the Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed, but He left it behind for us. He emptied Himself on our behalf. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in so doing He came into dire poverty. This is the story of the Incarnation. But more than mere incarnation or becoming human — for this was also His *humiliation*. He identified Himself with us not only in our humanity, but also in all of our poverty, misery, guilt, sin, and our flesh. For He became poor; He became flesh; He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. He who knew no sin was made to be sin for our sakes. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us into the midst of the Christmas story. For there we find witnesses to the poverty of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is Bethlehem, the city of His birth. It was not a great city, but one almost too small to be counted among the thousands of Judah. There was the stable in which He was born. Surely now His home was not an ivory palace. His garments now were swaddling clothes, not cassia-dipped robes. The manger was His crib. All about Him was the curse, darkness, sin, death, pain, and tears. These are more than interesting facts. They are signs of His complete identification with us in our poverty.

Now all of this was meant to be an example to the Corinthians — and to us — for our giving to the poor. We should help the needy voluntarily even as Christ did.

Yes, an example, but much more than an example. This is our *source* of riches. He became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might become rich. He who is the Son makes us to share in His Sonship. He who is the heir of all things makes us to be joint-heirs with Him. He who knew no sin, yet was made to be sin for our sakes, has made us to be the righteousness of God. He who shared and shares the glory of God, grants unto us the hope of glory. He who is the light of the heavenly city, opens the way for us to enjoy that heavenly place without curse, darkness, sin, death, pain, and tears. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a Gift, such Grace, calls us, even as it did the Macedonians of long ago, not only to give to the needy, but first to give our own selves to the Lord. This, too, is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ANDREW J. BANDSTRA

# The Perfection of God

*by James Daane*

FEW Christians set themselves to keep the command of Jesus: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Their failure even to attempt to fulfill this command stems from the conviction that it is quite impossible to be perfect as God is perfect. A serious attempt to do the impossible is regarded as highly impractical; indeed, as the stuff out of which comedy and tragedy is made.

This command of our Lord, however, ought not so easily be brushed aside. For the truth is that God never demands of us the impossible, compelling us to become comic or tragic figures in the attempt to do what cannot be done. As St. Augustine said long ago: when God demands what we cannot do, He also imparts the grace that enables us to do it. Law comes in the context of grace. With the divine command comes the gift of power to meet the demand. In its reverse form this same truth is expressed in the Biblical teaching that God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength, and that with the temptation comes the power to withstand. The common failure to make serious attempt to fulfill this command of perfection cannot be excused, therefore, by the easy expedient that Jesus is demanding the impossible.

The failure to make the attempt has often been given a kind of academic respectability and theological justification. It has been urged that Jesus gave this commandment simply to hold up an unattainable ideal. What He gave then is not a law to be kept, but a law which, because it cannot be kept, teaches men that they are sinners. If this is the reason Jesus gave this commandment, it has little achieved its purpose. For it is only in the attempt to keep the law that men learn that they are sinners. But, as has been observed, few Christians seriously set themselves to the keeping of this commandment.

A second consideration militates against the view that Jesus is merely holding up an unattainable ideal in order that men may learn their sinfulness. Prior to giving this command Jesus had informed His disciples that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees, and that their righteousness must be more than that of publicans and heathen Gentiles. The intent of Jesus at this point is not to teach men that they are sinners and have no righteousness. On the contrary, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and is teaching them that even the scribes and Pharisees, the publicans and heathen, do have a kind of righteousness, but that the righteousness of the children of God must *exceed,* and be *more,* than that of religious scribe and Pharisee, of irreligious publican and heathen. Jesus is urging that the children of the heavenly Father must possess a greater righteousness; they must be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. Only then will they be children of the Father, for it belongs to the nature of a child to be like his father.

What is this perfection of God which must characterize His children? We must be careful, lest we put ourselves in the place of God. It does not become us as Christians to restort to the dictionary, or to our own minds, to discover the meaning of perfection. We do well to heed the dictum of Kierkegaard that we must not coach the Bible, but rather allow the Bible to coach us. Our role is not to discover the nature of perfection out of our own resources. Should we assume this role, we should presume a perfection of God which is not ours. Our role here is to listen, and by listening to learn what that perfection of God is which characterizes His children.

If we listen to the Scripture we learn that the perfection of God is much more than mere sinlessness. God is indeed sinless; in Him is light and no darkness at all. But this is negative statement. It says much; yet it is "much" only in terms of the negative. It tells us what God is *not.* But statements which tell us what God is not, do not tell us what He is. The perfection of God therefore is by no means adequately defined by the statement that God is sin*less.*

Only if we disengage our minds from the commonly held Hegelian notion that what a thing is not, determines what it is, will our minds be open to the Biblical teaching concerning the perfection of God. If we listen to this Sermon on the Mount we shall hear that the perfection of God is more than sinlessness, for we are told that the perfection of God exceeds the righteousness of scribe and Pharisee, publican and Gentile. These have a righteousness which is of the law, a righteousness which is definable as justice: an eye for an eye, love for those who give love, greeting for those who also greet. But the righteousness of God exceeds this. It is, as Paul tells us in Romans and Philippians, a righteousness which is God's own righteousness, a righteousness which is "apart from the law." When God reveals His own righteousness, a right-

ousness which is apart from the law, God does ot violate His law. Rather, He establishes His law, ut establishes it *by going beyond it.* As Lawgiver, od is not *bound* by His own law. To say that od is bound by His own law, is to say too much. et inasmuch as the law is the expression of od's being and nature, God necessarily, that is, aturally, does not violate His law. It is impossible, or example, for God to lie. In this sense, God *nust* tell the truth. But God is not obliged to save he sinner, to reveal His own righteousness which s apart from law, the righteousness which is the ower of God unto salvation. This righteousness s His *grace,* and the revelation of this righteousess is His *free* act. In short, God is not comelled by law to be gracious, to save the sinner. ence the righteousness of God, God's own rightousness, which is "apart from the law," on the ne hand establishes the law, but on the other goes eyond the law (and in so doing establishes it), nd as such is not a righteousness which is definble as mere justice (an eye for an eye, tooth for ooth, love for love) but as a righteousness which xceeds that of scribe etc.; it is the righteousness f His *grace.*

Again, the law requires that we love our neighor as we love ourselves. This, however, does not equire the giving up of one's life for one's neighor. Indeed, if I love him *as I love myself,* I shall ot be prompted to die for him, precisely because I ove him according to the measure of a legitimate self-love. In this connection, too, the words of Jesus are significant, "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

And finally, when Jesus became one of us, He was obligated to keep the law, but He was not obligated by law to keep the law *for us,* not obligated by law to *die for us.* Consequently, the righteousness or perfection of Jesus is not indicated adequately by the mere fact that He kept the law, but rather by this, that He kept the law *for us,* and by this, that He *died for us.* Jesus' righteousness is not mere sinlessness; it is indicated rather by this, that He loved us more than His own life and gave up His life for us. In *this* He revealed the righteousness which is apart from the law, the righteousness of God which is God's own righteousness. In *this* He went beyond the law, and by going beyond law at once established the law, and revealed the righteousness of God which is His perfection, that righteousness and perfection which is God's *grace* and is the power of God unto *salvation.* God is not less than just when in grace He saves the sinner; He is more than just in that He is gracious. This is God's perfection, revealed in Christ, a perfection which is His glory, a perfection which characterizes His children and gives them a righteousness which *exceeds* and does *more* than scribe and Pharisee, publican and heathen Gentile.

The perfection of God of Matthew 5 is that grace of God which goes beyond mere justice and goes out to the evil man, and not merely to the good man; to the unjust man, and not merely to the just man. In distinction from publican and heathen, God loves those who do not love Him, and in distinction from scribe and Pharisee who would not lift a finger, said Jesus, to help the burdened, God loves the sinful and needy, the evil and the unjust, sending them rain and sunshine.

* * * *

LEONARD Verduin has written brilliantly in the pages of the *Reformed Journal* on this passage of Matthew. He has asserted that this passage teaches that God loves "indiscriminately." If I understand him correctly, and may say so, I think I agree with what he means rather than with what he says in his use of the word "indiscriminately." It seems clear that he means that God loves the evil man as well as the good man, the unjust as well as the just. Yet I fear that the designation of this as indiscriminate love or grace may in fact obscure the precise teaching of Jesus concerning the perfection of God. The perfection of God which Jesus here defines is not indicated by the fact that God's love and grace *includes,* and indiscriminately includes, evil and unjust as well as good and just men. It seems clear that the perfection of God is indicated, according to Matthew 5, in the fact that God, in distinction from scribe, Pharisee, publican and heathen, has love and grace not only for the good and just man, but for those who are evil and unjust. In short, the perfection of God is revealed in this: God's love and grace can, and does, go out to *sinners.* God's perfection is not identical with that of scribe etc., differing only in an indiscriminate larger inclusiveness, including those whom scribe etc. exclude. It differs in kind, rather than in degree of inclusiveness. Or more precisely, it differs in kind and *therefore* is more inclusive than the righteousness of scribe etc. The righteousness of God which is His perfection, namely, the righteousness of His grace and love for sinners, differs from the righteousness of scribe etc. as grace differs from justice. This righteousness of God is His own unique righteousness, which alone allows entrance into the kingdom of heaven. And God's children who share this righteousness of God, therefore, also differ from scribe etc., not merely in degree but in kind. Since God's perfection is a love and grace for sinners, for unjust and evil men, the distinguishing mark of the

child of the Father in heaven is that he loves his enemies, blesses and prays for those who curse and persecute him.

To describe this gracious perfection of God as "indiscriminate" is to say that it is common to all men, that it includes the unjust and evil *as well as* the just and the good man, that it includes those whom the scribe etc. exclude. But this, it seems to me, obscures the nature of God's gracious and unique perfection, namely, that it extends (in distinction from the righteousness of scribe etc.) to evil and unjust men, that is to *sinful* men. Once the nature of God's perfection is clearly seen and understood, one can then, if he wishes, proceed to characterize it as indiscriminate, that is, something that is extended to all men[1]

* * * *

ONE of the important arguments used by those who denied common grace was that the righteousness and holiness of God make it impossible for God to do anything but hate the unrighteous and unholy sinner. It was urged that God can have grace and love for the elect only, because only the elect (in Christ) is good and righteous and loving. The Biblical teaching that love is the bond of perfection was defined as the relationship of love between a perfect subject (God) and a perfect object (man). It should be observed that in this argument against common grace the perfection of God is defined in terms of a divine goodness for the good man, a love of God for those who love Him, a favor of God only for the righteous man. But is not this definition of God's perfection the precise opposite of the definition that Jesus gives in Matthew 5? Indeed, does it not make the righteousness of God identical with the righteousness of scribe, Pharisee, publican, and heathen Gentile? They, too, loved those that loved them, greeted those that greeted them. But in so doing they revealed that they had nothing of that perfection of God which expresses itself in the children of God when they love their enemies and bless those who curse them.

If this idea of the perfection of God which underlies this argument against the doctrine of common grace is correct, then God's righteousness does not exceed that of scribe and Pharisee, and God does not do more than publican and heathen Gentile.

But the perfection of God as taught by Jesus consists precisely in this that it exceeds and goes beyond that of scribe etc., and thereby reveals itself as not mere justice, but as a divine love and grace for sinners, for the unjust and the evil. The perfection of God defined in Matthew 5 is the grace of God which goes out to sinners. It is this perfection which Jesus revealed when on the cross He prayed for His enemies, "Father, forgive them . . ." and which Stephen revealed when he prayed God that the sin of those who stoned him for preaching Christ to them, might not be laid to their charge. Neither Jesus nor Stephen could pray thus on the grounds of justice, but only on the basis of grace. And when God's children love their enemies, pray for those who persecute them, and bless those that curse them, then they, too, possess and reveal in their conduct that perfection of God which is His grace toward evil and unjust men. Then they are perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. Then they have that righteousness without which they would not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The demand of perfection which Jesus laid upon His disciples is not an unattainable ideal; it is not an impossible demand. If it were, then no one would enter the kingdom of heaven. The perfection of God is His gracious conduct toward sinners, the children of God who have been fashioned and shaped by this gracious divine perfection must reveal this same perfection in their conduct toward their enemies.

"As we forgive our debtors. . . ." Perfect as God is perfect!

1. Whether or not one wishes so to proceed, will depend on whether or not one believes this passage teaches common grace. It was doubtless the example of Christian Reformed theologians who in 1924 used this passage of Matthew 5 as a proof-text for common grace, that influenced Leonard Verduin to speak of the grace taught in this passage as an "indiscriminate" grace. In the context of the 1924 controversy "indiscriminate" and "common" mean the same thing. An "indiscriminate" grace is a grace for the evil and the unjust as well as for the just and the good, that is, a grace which is for everyone. And a "common" grace, according to the theologians of 1924, is a grace which is for all God's creatures, reprobate *as well as* elect, that is, a grace which is for everyone. Therefore, to question the adequacy of an interpretation of this passage in terms of "indiscriminate" is also, admittedly, to question the interpretation of this passage in terms of "common." It is to raise the question whether the passage in Matthew 5 actually teaches common grace. Can it be legitimately used as a proof-text for this doctrine? This question will be faced in another article.

*The Editors and Publisher of the* JOURNAL *take this occasion to express the wish and prayer that all spiritual blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours in this hallowed season and in the days of the coming year.*

# Sure Idealism

*by Stanley Wiersma*

IDEALS, THE UNATTAINABLE PERFECTIONS that all men long for, are the stuff that poets work with. To create a world of unattainable perfection is their vocation; to interpret the everyday world in the light of this ideal world is their occupation; to translate this interpretation into language that the rest of us can understand is their art; to preserve this translation in significant form is their craft. Poets help to preserve the ideals of our race. Without ideals there can be no poetry.

Without interpreting the flesh-and-blood Stella in the light of an ideal Stella, Sir Phillip Sidney could not have written:

> Who will in fairest book of Nature know
> How virtue may best lodg'd in beauty be,
> Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,
> Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.
> There shall he find all voices' overthrow,
> Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
> Of reason, from whose light those nightbirds fly,
> That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so."
>
> (from Sonnet 71, *Astrophel and Stella*, 1591, 1598)

Sidney was a practicing idealist.

C. Day Lewis, our contemporary poet, berates idealism and calls himself a materialist. Now even a materialistic husband may feel pity for his pregnant wife's morning sickness or for her general discomfort, but it takes an idealist to transcend the immediate details of pregnancy and to transform married, domestic love to this:

> Now she is like the white tree-rose
> That takes a blessing from the sun.
> Summer has filled her veins with light
> And her warm heart is washed with noon.
>
> (from Lyric VI, *From Feathers to Iron*, 1931)

When he wrote these lines, Day Lewis was an idealist in spite of himself.

Wordsworth's idealism is overwhelmingly broad; it embraces the cosmos itself:

> . . . Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege
> Through all the years of this our life to lead
> From joy to joy: for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings.
>
> (from "Tintern Abbey," *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798)

Poets to be poets must be idealists.

* * * *

BUT IDEALISTS inevitably become disillusioned. The world is harsh; ideals are too delicate to thrive in it for long.

Sidney's Stella married another man. Sidney did what he could to foster his idealistic image of her after she belonged to his rival, but idealism gradually gave way to despair. All ideals for happy human love were ruthlessly suppressed by bitterness and disillusion. In his last sonnet he groped toward an ascetic Christianity:

> Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust
> And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things.
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust.
> Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
>
> (from *Astrophel and Stella*, 1598)

His ideal had become higher; his verse had become exquisite; but this sonnet is the only testimony we have of his religious phase. He no longer celebrated his ideal in a flood of poetry and a rush of images. He was disillusioned.

C. Day Lewis is no longer married to his "white tree-rose" and in much of the verse that followed his divorce there is disillusion:

> . . . Another tedious piteous woman
> Was Helen, got by heart.
>
> (from "Moods of Love," *Pegasus*, 1957)

His second wife's pregnancies have not been recorded in verse.

Wordsworth continued his ideal of Nature longer than most idealists. Even in that last perplexing period when he abandoned so many of his earlier poetic ideals, even after the metric had become tame (notice in the passage below the safe pauses at the ends of lines and the monotony of the medial caesurae), even after the images had become crude (notice the silly pun on *train*) . . . even then there was idealistic power, even then he could be violently indignant with the industrial revolution and with the railroads that marred the scenery:

> Proud were ye, Mountains, when, in times of old,
> Your patriot sons, to stem invasive war,
> Intrenched your brows; ye gloried in each scar:
> Now, for your shame, a Power, the Thirst of Gold,
> That rules o'er Britain like a baneful star,
> Wills that your peace, your beauty, shall be sold,
> And clear way made for her triumphal car
> Through the beloved retreats your arms enfold!
> Hear ye that Whistle? As her long-linked train
> Swept onwards, did the vision cross your view?
> Yes, ye were startled; — and, in balance true,
> Weighing the mischief with the promised gain,
> Mountains, and Vales, and Floods, I call on you
> To share the passion of a just disdain.
>
> (Sonnet XLVI, 1844)

Was Wordsworth an exception? Did he actually preserve his ideal of Nature until the end?

Wordsworth did not preserve his idealism without compromise. For while he fostered this just disdain toward the railroad, Wordsworth was man of the world enough to know where the money lay. More money came to the Wordsworth coffers through William's shrewd investments in railroad bonds than from any other single source. Wordsworth himself was not free from the thirst of gold which he deplored. Nature never did betray Wordsworth as poet; but Wordsworth as business man knew better than to trust his aesthetic ideals, knew better than to let ideals interfere with his business sense. The later Wordsworth knew that the poet and the businessman within himself must be kept apart; think of the tremendous disillusionment to the earlier Wordsworth during the cruel process of finding this out.

Ideals have rough going in our world. The poet himself and his environment are both too imperfect for ideals to thrive.

* * * *

THE POET who can sustain uncompromising idealism beyond disillusion and in spite of the world is a rarity. David was such a poet.

Once beyond Sunday school, we find that David's life had a decidedly seamy side. There was the unjust murder of Uriah in David's sordid little affair with Bathsheba. There was proud rebellion against God in David's numbering of the people. Lax administration of the royal family kept the kingdom on the verge of civil war for much of David's reign. David had, of course, recognized his own sins and they had been forgiven. But even after the joy of salvation was restored, would not some of the buoyant idealism be permanently shattered?

The last poem David wrote is a marvel of idealism. This is what I call the first stanza of the poem:

> He that ruleth over men must be just,
> Ruling in the fear of God.
> And he shall be as the light of the morning,
> When the sun riseth,
> Even a morning without clouds;
> As the tender grass
> Springing out of the earth
> By clear shining after rain.
> (II Samuel 23: 3, 4. King James Translation)[1]

How can David speak of his ideal of the just ruler . . . he, the unjust? How dare he expend poetic energy on a theme which glorifies those very qualities which he himself could not boast?

The central idea, the ideal of the just ruler, is communicated to us largely through personally experienced, sensuous images, but these images are only the vehicle. The ideal itself rests not on human perception or human emotion. For David goes on in what I call the second stanza:

> Although my house be not so with God;
> Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant[2]
> Ordered in all things
> And sure. . . .[3]
> (II Samuel 23:5)

The mess David made of his own rule has not dimmed his idealism for what his rule should have been; his idealism is as sure as God's grace to him, as sure as the covenant itself. In the face of all of the ideals he has broken during his life, he reaffirms his ideals in glowing poetry at his end.

* * * *

DAVID'S IDEALISM is not to be confused with the false idealism of the Optimist Club. Optimist Club idealism says that every Sidney will find his Stella in the end, every Lewis will have his day with one wife or another, and every Wordsworth is more comfortable for having compromised his ideals with the business world. Sidney, Lewis, and Wordsworth themselves could not abide such easy idealism. Their several ideals were devotedly serious while they lasted. That in the end their idealism could not stand up under experience is

1. I arrange the words in lines to accentuate the rhythms of the King James Version.

2. The Revised Standard Version reads thus: "Yea, does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant . . . ." On the face of it, the RSV seems contrary to the King James Version: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made me an everlasting covenant . . . ." In the RSV, David affirms that his royal house meets the ideals of the first stanza. In the KJV, David admits that his royal house has fallen short. It is important for a complete understanding of the poem to know which interpretation is correct.

But I must not overemphasize the difference between the two translations. Although David admits the shortcomings of his reign in the KJV, there is also a compensation: "Yet he [God] hath made with me an everlasting covenant . . . ." Although David exults that his house is indeed right with God in the RSV, yet he does not point to the facts of his reign as evidence, he points to God's mercy: "For he [God] has made with me an everlasting covenant . . . ." If David's house is not right with God, God's covenant will make it right. If David's house is right with God, God's covenant, not David's rule, has made it right. So translated either way, it is perfectly unambiguous that faith in the covenant is the basis for David's idealism. That is the central point on which I build in this essay.

3. What I call the second stanza concludes with Messianic hope: "For this [that the royal house be right with God] is all my salvation and all my desire . . . ." It is David's heir, a greater than Solomon, who accomplished the salvation who fulfilled the desire, who set the royal house right with God. This Messianic dimension to the poem gives David's idealism its ultimate basis in the Christ.

A third stanza foretells the destruction of the wicked.

estimony to the highness of the idealism. But, after all, an ideal that does not last is only a half deal. The Optimist Club ideals do last, but they are not significant enough as ideals to come into ension with life as it is lived; they are too easily attained. Genuine ideals are not fully attainable by man in time. If Sidney, Lewis, and Wordsworth's ideals are half ideals because they were abandoned, we may question whether the ideals of the Optimist Club are ideals at all.

David's is not an easy idealism. He has been deceitful, lecherous, and proud; he has been shown his sins and he has confessed them with humiliation; he has been forgiven and restored. His spirit has been on several perilous wanderings and by grace he has come home safely each time. But the spirit that wandered once may wander again. Danger and fear are involved. This is not an easy idealism.

Fortunately, David does not see his own wandering nature as the basis for his idealism. If man's nature becomes the basis for idealism, idealism is not to be trusted. Sidney abandoned his ideal of romantic love because the person of Stella alone embodied his ideal; her marriage to the rival killed the ideal within him. C. Day Lewis abandoned his ideal of marriage because the ideal was based on a particular marriage alone; no particular marriage between two particular people with particular faults of their own could have met the high ideal. Wordsworth's ideal was that mankind should assume its rightful place as an extension of Nature; Nature could not feed and clothe her particular extension, William Wordsworth, in a manner approved by a civilized society, without those comprising railroad bonds to meet expenses. Idealism is not to be trusted if its basis is found in man himself (either individually or collectively) or in the world around him. David avoids these pitfalls in his poetic career; his idealism outlasts the flux of his experience; his idealism has been purged and disciplined by experience, but never destroyed; his idealism rests in God.

For all the nobleness of the idealism of Sidney, Lewis, and Wordsworth, next to David's their idealism seems naively sentimental and subjective. It is also temporary. God's covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," is the basis for the idealism that remains with David beyond disillusionment. Such idealism, and the poetry it fosters, is not naively sentimental and subjective. Such idealism, such poetry, is not the product of a temporary phase. Like the covenant on which it is based, it is ordered and sure.

# Comment on "Calvinists and Democrats"

ARTICLES are published in *The Reformed Journal* for the sole purpose of providing, and stimulating, thoughtful discussion of timely, vital issues in the life of our and other Christian communions. Editors and contributors alike set themselves the goal of dealing with timely topics in a "timeless" way; that is, we wish the *Journal* to be read with interest today and with profit both today and tomorrow. And however often we fall short of our goal, we are humbly grateful to know that many readers do find their file of *Journals* a cherished and fruitful possession.

Occasionally it happens that an article which the writer thought to be timely is received by some readers as "*timed*"; and the approach the writer meant to be "timeless" is received by some readers as carefully calculated propaganda. That such misunderstanding can and does occur is a risk every contributor to the *Journal* knows he must run. Insofar as he can, he tries to forestall this misconception and others explicitly or implicitly as he writes his piece. But communication is not perfect.

And so, placing an article on a subject so controversial as politics, and timing it for the peak of the national election campaigns, invited, in a way, the complaint that its timeliness was "timed," and that its appeal to principles was just election-eve ballyhoo. And that complaint was received, from some. Others accepted the piece as an invitation to discussion; and we are pleased to print one highly competent response herewith. (There was even one or two who attributed the nation-wide Democratic sweep somewhat to our "chicanery"; and what we may have, from this perspective, accomplished in Alaska will by now be known to the reader. We offer the pages of the *Journal* in October, 1960, to any Republican who wishes to reverse "our" successes.) For those, however, who were disturbed by their reaction to the article we intended to be timely and timeless, I want to offer some little insight into the origin of the piece, an account which was, I thought, too personal for inclusion in the original.

* * * *

THE line of argument developed in the article has been in my mind for some time. I have tried

to act and speak out of those convictions in various places and ways.

Action engenders reaction. One such reaction to my participation as a citizen in politics is the letter which we have, by kind permission of its writer, chosen to print below. It contains a specific charge; and I have returned to the writer an answer to it. It was this letter which, in early September, sparked the gap between my long growing determination to write some "apologia" for Democrats, and the necessary will to get it off while things political occupied the center of the national stage. However "timed" it may have seemed to some readers, those who have sought to meet publication deadlines know that a determination created a week or two before copy is due means that the copy finds its way to the printer down a stream of midnight oil. To be timely was worth the effort; but the idea that we might sway an election, even for county clerk, would have lighted hardly one midnight lamp.

I did not choose to cast the article in the form suggested by the letter. The consideration of a far older (one postcard voicing it has been in my file since 1950) and more serious criticism, namely, that Democrats can hardly be Christians, would afford us all, I thought, a more fundamental basis for discussion, and one from which such specific criticism as that made below might be viewed.

The piece made the (extended) deadline. It was published. It occasioned discussion, which was its intention. Thus effort is rewarded. Where it also created misapprehension, the channels for discussion were twisted or closed. And thus effort goes for naught. That *my* particular effort should be fruitless is important to few except me. But that the discussion of Christian political responsibility should be stifled is regrettable.

The subject is incalculably important. I hoped to open a perspective upon it, to invite those who equate Democrats with other unpleasantries to give us another glance, and to promote continued exploration of the place of the Christian in the tensions between the political parties. From the responses we have received, I am grateful to suppose that these goals have been, in some measure, achieved. But wherever the seemingly "timed" has obscured the intended "timeless" I direct this account of my efforts and intentions.

This is the letter to which I have been referring:

September 2, 1958

DEAR MR. DEKOSTER:

I am attaching an article which appeared in the *Muskegon Chronicle* about ten days ago. I read that you delivered the keynote address at the completion of which all loyal Democrats rose and applauded wildly.

I do not question your right to align yourself politically with the Democratic party; however, it is unfortunate that you have seen fit to do so. The Jeffersonian ideal as embodied in the early Democratic party has long since been lost to the grasping and ruthless labor hierarchy. The fact that the Democratic party has been thoroughly infiltrated by labor cannot be contested.

Consequently, we are not talking about the Democratic party but we are talking about the people, and the philosophy of these people, who operate under the cloak of the Democratic party. The fact that Michigan labor is politically centered around Walter Reuther is generally acknowledged. It is well known that Reuther is not an outspoken proponent of American free enterprise, particularly the brand of free enterprise which I was taught while at Calvin.

Our American heritage guarantees us certain basic fundamental rights. Among these rights is for a man to go into business and to make as much money for himself as possible, as long as it is done legitimately. However, this is not the position taken by the labor hierarchy which is now firmly in control of the Democratic party. For the laboring man the battle cry is constantly, More, more, more. The fact that a businessman should have the undisputed right to operate his business as he sees fit is frequently challenged.

I object to your affiliating yourself with this group. I think it is a sad commentary on your political training that you find joy and contentment in being bedfellows with labor's high command. The conduct of Michigan labor, particularly Reuther and Mazey in the Kohler strike, is testimony to their moral bankruptcy.

Again I woud like to say that it is unfortunate that you have chosen to cast your fortunes with these charlatans.

Yours very truly,
JOHN E. BYTWERK

# *A Note on "Calvinists and Democrats"*

## by Clifton J. Orlebeke

MR. DEKOSTER'S article "Calvinists and Democrats" was stimulating and, in its way, persuasive. Whether it was *convincing*, however, is a matter which bears some further comment. The following observations are, I trust, relevant to the cogency of his article as a piece of argument.

It strikes me, to begin with, that there is some ambiguity about Mr. DeKoster's thesis. This is illustrated by his opening paragraphs, where he assumes the stance of a defender or apologist. Against whom? Against the Christian who is a dogmatic Republican, who asks "how can you be a Democrat?" as if the answer were "foregone." In reply to this bigoted approach, Mr. DeKoster pleads for tolerance and open-mindedness. He says, several times over, that Christianity (more particularly, Calvinism) implies adherence to neither

major political party, and that Calvinists can conscientiously and with full claim to logical consistency support the program of either party. If I interpret him correctly, Mr. DeKoster seeks, by asserting these logical relations, to rebut political dogmatists of both parties.

But the article does not end here. In fact, Mr. DeKoster nowhere tries to show that these logical relations obtain. Rather, he turns to considerations (including the religious, but not excluding another type) which support what he understands to be the philosophy and program of the Democratic party. Insofar as he does this, he argues no longer against political dogmatists, but against non-Democrats *per se*. He is no longer a partisan of open-mindedness, but simply a partisan.

I am not saying that this shift of thesis is reprehensible. I am simply pointing out that it is a shift. Furthermore, when examined closely, this shift involves him in a rather queer complication. It is this: a certain proposition or set of propositions (Calvinism) is said not to imply the tenets of either political party, but to be logically consistent with both. Now we may assume in some particular case, or even in general, that the principles of the Democratic party are logically incompatible with those of the Republican party — or else partisanship would not be significant. In this case, Calvinism is logically consistent with two inconsistent theses. This situation is not impossible, as it turns out; but where it does obtain, nothing whatsoever can be inferred from Calvinism regarding the truth or falsity of either opposing doctrine, unless Calvinism is itself internally inconsistent.

Yet Mr. DeKoster clearly does try to draw inferences from the theory and practice of Calvinism, as well as from another area, in support of the Democratic party. By doing this, as I see it, he commits himself to one of two assertions: either Calvinism is inconsistent and thus can imply inconsistent political theses, or, to the degree that Mr. DeKoster is right about the Democrats, Christian Republicans really are inconsistent.

Presumably Mr. DeKoster wants to say neither. Yet he cannot have it both ways. If he wants to show that Calvinism does not imply the Democratic program, he should give grounds for this kind of logical independence. Then, to balance things off, he could do the same favor for the Republicans. This is an intelligible thesis, even though it does deny a kind of political relevance for Calvinism which many of its adherents hold dear.

On the other hand, he could (and does) adduce considerations from Calvinism which *support* the Democratic party program. That is, he denies what he alleged earlier about lack of implications. And insofar as he does this, and Republicanism is inconsistent with the Democratic program, he does imply that Republicans are inconsistent with Calvinism. It makes no difference that Mr. DeKoster admits that his evidence falls short of demonstration. The question here is not about sufficiency of evidence, but about the thesis on which this evidence bears. And that thesis, I submit, becomes quite obvious by the time one reaches Mr. DeKoster's peroration. It is, to put it most mildly, that Calvinists in 1958 have at least a *prima facie* obligation to be Democrats.

The point becomes even more evident when we consider what, in particular, Mr. DeKoster says about the relation between Calvinism and Democrats. He favors the Democratic party because of its program of direct intervention in socio-economic affairs, which is said to agree with the main tendency of Calvinist policy in the past. Now let it be granted, for the nonce, that this is true: that the main outlines of historic Calvinist practice point toward today's Democratic rather than Republican policies. What follows from this? Nothing at all, unless one is prepared either to argue for traditionalism *per se*, or to hold the additional thesis that our Calvinist forebears did what they did on *principial* grounds which are still normative today. The latter is clearly affirmed by Mr. DeKoster; hence those who oppose the "insight" of Roosevelt, shared by Marx and Calvinism, are inconsistent so far forth with their principles.

I cannot help thinking that Mr. DeKoster's debating habits have got the better of him here. The essence of debate is to support one side of an argument with all one's might. The debater is by definition partisan, and his goal is victory. He may well admit, abstractly, that the opponent is conceivably right; he may even admit, in an excess of charity, that the relevant facts are consistent with both his and the opponent's positions and imply neither. But he cannot fail, as he proceeds to his task, to undercut and contradict both of these admissions.

There remain two substantial points raised by Mr. DeKoster which I propose to deal with more briefly. One concerns the validity of his historical influence, and the other his economic cause-effect argument. For a thorough analysis of both, I am content to hear the experts. Let this, however, be observed:

(1) History does wear many faces; as a colleague suggested to me, one could argue quite plausibly that the genius of Protestantism has been to locate moral and economic responsibilities in individuals rather than in the state, at the same time giving them new freedom of initiative along with these responsibilities. From this point of view, growing state intervention and control is retrogression *from* Protestant principles. Another relevant variable neglected by Mr. DeKoster is *size;* all of his historical precedents, when compared to the present United States, involve societies of piddling magni-

tude where direct citizen participation in affairs of government was, at least theoretically, more feasible. Just how much does Mr. DeKoster wish to extrapolate from Calvin's Geneva to, e.g., Washington, D.C.? Are decentralization and local autonomy important to him?

(2) Mr. DeKoster's argument from economics is, so far as I can see, essentially pragmatic. Addressing himself *ad hominem* to believers in private enterprise, he tells them, in effect, that the Democrats knew better than they what was good for them. The evidence is in the form of tangible results: profits large, luxury great, business stimulated. It may be that the Democratic program was a necessary condition of all these benefits. This we will never know. We can be sure, however, that it was not the *only* necessary condition. At any rate, I think that most of Mr. DeKoster's readers felt more comfortable when they read this section of his piece. They had heard this talk of Democratic prosperity before, and had heard the Republican rebuttals as well. All Americans are for high standards of living, and peace, and security, and freedom, and the rights of the common man. They just differ on how best to achieve them.

## *Response to Mr. Orlebeke*

IDEALLY, the reply to criticism should carry forward the discussion. I hope that the following comments do so:

(1) The intent of my article was to show that Calvinists can, while remaining true to their heritage and to their Christian convictions, "find a place for service in the Democratic Party, 1958." To substantiate this claim I tried to develop the thesis that Calvinism has exhibited in practice the same attitude toward state intervention in socio-economic affairs as that now manifested by Democrats.

(2) Mr. Orlebeke's critique deals only "briefly" with this "substantial" argument I have just summarized. He makes two observations, and I shall comment on each:

(a) To Mr. Orlebeke's question about the importance of "decentralization and local autonomy," I can give no adequate answer here; but I will say that I think there must always be some local-national balance, though I am neither impressed by the slogan of *states rights* nor frightened by that of *federal bureaucracy.*

(b) My argument was, you may recall, that the New Deal and the Fair Deal have been written deep into American life; and that, contrary to the predictions of calamity made at every step of the way by Rebublican critics, our national prosperity stands at an unparalleled peak. Is it because Mr. Orlebeke cannot deny these things that he labels the argument "pragmatic"? After all, is not state intervention in economics concerned *by definition* with the production and distribution of goods, however "pragmatic" that, or the measure of its success, may be? Since no one has ever maintained that Democratic policies were "the *only* necessary condition" of prosperity, Mr. Orlebeke and I can, on this point, happily agree.

(3) A logical critique of my piece occupies most of Mr. Orlebeke's space. He is an accomplished logician, and I do not suggest that the reader question his reasoning. Mr. Orlebeke would, I imagine, call it elementary: If $A$ contradicts $B$, and if $C$ is consistent with $A$, then $C$ contradicts $B$; assuming that $C$ is relevant to $A$ and $B$ at all. Put *Democrats* for $A$, *Republicans* for $B$, and *Calvinism* for $C$. If it may be safely assumed that Democrats contradict Republicans, and if (as I argued) Calvinism supports the Democrats, then why not go on and frankly maintain that Calvinists cannot consistently be Republicans.? This is Mr. Orlebeke's question, if I understand him, and to it he offers his own answer: either my piece is involved in a "queer complication," which means, I imagine, bad logic; or, my "debating habits" have the better of my ethics, and I pretend to concede what in fact I "undercut and contradict" later on. *Because,* as the reader knows, I did *not* conclude that Calvinists could not be Republicans, nor even that they should be Democrats. Why not? To this question I offer a dual reply:

(a) Mr. Orlebeke ignores, I think, my carefully emphasized reasons for making the judgment he thinks implicit in my premises. Political parties are, I said, so complex, so often self-contradictory, that party membership is in itself a very vague thing. Moreover, as Mr. Orlebeke notes for his own purposes but not in this connection, I pointed out that "history wears many faces," and therefore my thinking that I recognize one of them — namely Calvinism's relation to state intervention — is liable to many kinds of qualification. I found, therefore, grounds for believing that Calvinists can be Democrats; but I maintained that both Calvinism and politics are too complex for the kind of flat judgment Mr. Orlebeke says my premises demand. This explanation Mr. Orlebeke ignores.

(b) And so we look in vain for precisely the real point of clash between Mr. Orlebeke's main thesis and mine. He does not bring his purely logical syllogisms into substantial contact with those complexities I had stressed. We do not ask: how good is Mr. Orlebeke's logic? It is good enough. But we do ask: how *relevant* to the complexities of Calvinism and politics in practice is Mr. Orlebeke's pattern of consistency-inconsistency? Of course, if $A$ contradicts $B$, and if $C$ accords with $A$, one has no

difficulty in concluding in the *abstract* that "to the degree" that Calvinism (C) supports Democrats (A) it contradicts Republicans (B). Try it yourself on the first of Mr. Orlebeke's brief observations: if state intervention (A) contradicts individual initiative (B), and if the genius of Protestantism (C) supports individual initiative, then Protestants should oppose state intervention. *Abstractly*, the reasoning is, perhaps, persuasive. But make it *concrete*: remember, for example, that state intervention means, among other things, public water supply, sewage disposal, fire and police protection, etc. And now try to tell your Protestant friends that these are not in the genius of Protestantism. They will find it hard to agree, and so might Mr. Orlebeke. But let us ask him, quite seriously, to apply his logical relationships to our political problems: will he delineate the lines of contradiction between Democrats and Republicans, in the light of Calvinism, so clearly that we can all see the consistency and inconsistency which my article seems to blur or ignore? If he does, I suspect that by the time he has *counted in* all of the "relevant variables" of which he speaks, he will have *counted out* most of the sharp lines drawn by his abstract hypotheticals.

(4) As to debater's devices, the reader might profitably study how astutely Mr. Orlebeke hedges his affirmations about with phrases like: "Insofar as . . .," or "to the degree that . . .," or "now let it be granted, for the nonce . . .," or "it may be that . . .," or "not the *only* necessary . . .," and such. If it is a debater's tactic to keep open routes for strategic retreat, Mr. Orlebeke is prepared, I might say, for mass evacuation.

LESTER DEKOSTER

# The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement (III)

*by Donald Oppewal*

IN the October issue of the *Journal* I discussed what has perhaps been the most pervasive single influence on the Calvinistic school movement in America: the Christian Reformed Church. I pointed out in what ways the school has drawn life and sustenance from this denomination. I suggested also that in many ways the church as an ecclesiastical institution has limited the outreach and influence of the school, shaping it toward denominational rather than educational ends even after officially rejecting responsibility for its administration and control. I now turn to a consideration of the second most influential factor in the shaping of the school, the root that has sustained it in the past and promises to become the main taproot.

### THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE BIBLE: ITS RELIGIOUS ROOTS

Although the Calvinistic school in America has tried to live up to its Kuyperian tradition as a school free to seek its own ends and not those of any denomination, it has nevertheless always pledged allegiance to the Bible. It has always unashamedly declared that its educational program and policies are rooted in and justified by Biblical concepts concerning man and society. The specific interpretation of these concepts has, of course, been given from the point of view of Calvinism, and more specifically the Calvinism of the Netherlands, sometimes called neo-Calvinism. It is the Bible as interpreted by this religious and intellectual tradition that shapes the contours and provides the intellectual roots for the Calvinistic school system.

This rootage in the Bible through a given tradition is clearly expressed in the constitution of the National Union of Christian Schools. Article II states:

> The basis of the National Union of Christian Schools is the Word of God as interpreted by Reformed [i.e,. Calvinistic] standards . . . .
> [The Union] is committed to the Reformed world and life view. Its educational principles must therefore be distinctively Reformed in emphasis and character.

To some these "Reformed standards" are simply the doctrinal statements expressed in the great church creeds: The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. These are taken to be an adequate and relevant basis for educational theory and practice.

Others have held that these creeds are neither adequate nor automatically relevant. An early expression of this view was cited in a previous article. A similar view has been more recently suggested by the Public Relations Secretary of the National Union. At the convention of 1951, he

noted that some schools still used the Canons of Dort as one of the creedal statements basic to the school. He wondered what this document had to do with educational theory and practice, since it deals exclusively with such matters as total depravity, limited atonement, etc. He acknowledged that these were certainly proper subjects for catechisms and confession of faith, but doubted that these could furnish a dynamic for the field of education. (See NUCS Yearbook, 1951, pp. 131ff.)

*The Bible and School "Creeds"*

If it is true that "Reformed standards" or "Reformed principles" do not mean the creeds of any one church or group of churches, what then can these expressions refer to in education? A possible answer and one only hinted at in the literature on the school movement, is that concepts of man, God, and society are taken from the Bible and translated into educational terminology expressive of a position taken on educational issues. Whereas the church creeds embody doctrinal questions, the school "creeds" embody educational questions. For example, just as a given Calvinistic church might in its creed speak against Arminianism on the issue of the role of man in salvation, so a Calvinistic school might speak against progressive education on the issue of the proper organization of subject matter. Both institutions would have creeds rooted in the Bible, and neither would necessarily rest its case on the creeds of the other. In sum, both institutions would be rooted in and based upon the Bible, but the school and the church would have different creeds because they are meeting different issues and speaking on different controversies.

The tendency to identify the creeds of the church with the creeds of the school is perhaps understandable. The creeds of the church have been codified and are easily accessible to all. They are stated in specific documents, and a body of literature that interprets them is part of the tradition. There are no such documents and no such body of literature for the school. Even most school constitutions fail to state the position of the school on the major issues in educational theory. However, the absence of school creeds in some codified form does not necessarily indicate that no positions on educational issues have been taken by the school system. School creeds are not imbedded in documents as much as they are imbedded in practices pursued and principles applied. The actual school system with its concrete embodiment in a given curriculum and supported by a given organizational structure is expressive of beliefs about education and of sides taken on educational issues.

The Calvinistic school system may be said to have spoken on educational issues fully as much as any church synod has spoken on specifically theological and soteriological issues. Its rootage in the Bible as interpreted by the Reformed standards has led the school to take a position on such theoretical questions as (1) the proper locus of control of education and the school, (2) the proper relation between religion and education, (3) the proper sources for and the nature of truth, (4) the source of a principle of integration for education, and (5) the source of authority in the discipline of the learner.[1] An adequate statement of these, let alone an adequate defense of them, would require a book, and therefore cannot be given here. The areas are listed here simply to indicate that the school system does have a creed, but that it is the creed of no church, and that although the creed of a school system may not be drawn up and stated in any set of documents, it nevertheless has one in the form of practices and procedures which come to expression in that system.

The confusion and partial contradiction in the Calvinistic school system on the matter of the proper basis for its theory and the proper source of educational authority is natural. Both the church and the school do eventually find a common root, the Bible. While it is an easy step it is still a step that is fatal to education when we move from acknowledging a common source to declaring that therefore the creeds of the church are identical with the creeds of the school.

It must be admitted that this alternative position is not so much a completed and definitive one as it is an emerging one. The literature connected with the school movement is singularly weak in developing this interpretation of the meaning of Reformed standards for education. The scarcity of literature which addresses itself to this problem is an indication that the implications of this approach have not really captured the loyalties of all those who support these schools. The presence of the alternative position (i.e., that the church creeds are the theoretical basis for education in the day school) has discouraged the attempt to look deeply into the problem.

The reader need not be reminded that this failure to root the school consistently in either church creeds or "educational creeds" based on the Bible is just another instance of the ambiguous relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and the Calvinistic school movement which was described in the previous article. It can also be easily seen that this difference of opinion concerning the proper source of theory for the Christian school reaches back to the conflicting movements of another culture and country which were discussed in the first article of this series. This particular instance of confusion over the way in which the Bible affects educational theory is but one instance

1. See NUCS Yearbook, pp. 134 ff. for a brief elaboration of some of these.

of the broader confusion within the system in regard to its theoretical foundations.

### *The Bible and Other Disciplines*

There is another question within the school movement concerning the role of the Bible in the formulation of educational theory. It is the question of whether or not the Bible and theology are the only source upon which an educator can draw for the determination of theory and practice in the school. In the literature much tribute is paid to the Bible as the single source of authority and the sole ground of educational theory. In this view specific texts from the Bible are used to justify the Christian school, and certain aims of the school are established by reference to specific passages.[2] Since many of these tributes to the Bible as the sole source of educational principles occur in the context of inspirational speeches and hortatory articles about Christian education, they perhaps cannot be considered to be the best and most accurate statement on the matter of the role of the Bible in determining theory.

There are more perceptive and analytical statements that appear in the literature, and these indicate that often in the mind of the educator himself the Bible is seen as providing a general scheme of values about man and society, but that for the rest other sources of human knowledge are utilized.

A very early acknowledgment of the role of child psychology in education is indicated in a book translated from the Dutch. In the context of a discussion about methodology in teaching, the author says that the proper basis for method is the investigation and study of the child with a view to "discovery of the divine laws that control the development of the soul of the child."[3] A very recent and careful statement of the role of the Bible in the determination of educational principles is contained in the following statement:

> Calvinism can provide for educational theory and practice a sound anthropology, Scripturally oriented, and because of a Scriptural orientation, a coherent appraisal of insights in human development accruing to us from psychology, sociology, and psycho-therapy.[4]

Thus, the Bible gives a definition of man in the light of which discoveries in other fields can be utilized in education to solve the problems of method, of curriculum organization, of the role of the school in a given society, and others. This use of intellectual disciplines other than theology in the formulation of theory in education is regarded by some as a departure from a strict reliance on the Bible as the only infallible rule for faith and practice. However, it apparently has a solid defender in the person of Herman Bavinck, the Dutch theologian-educator, who said:

> Religion and ethics, philosophy, and psychology contain the principles from which the theory of education is inferred.[5]

He is also quoted as saying that psychology and sociology constitute the chief determiners of method.[6] Thus, the Calvinistic school system is basically rooted in the Bible, but it utilizes insights from other disciplines which are either established by fact or which seem to be consistent with Biblical insights.

### *The Bible As Academic Subject*

There are also other ways in which this school system has shown that it is rooted in the Bible. The curriculum of the typical school in this system has in it systematic training in Bible knowledge and the implications of Scriptural teachings for life. The precise way in which the Bible should be treated in the day school has not always been clearly enough defined to distinguish the day school from the Sunday school or from the catechism class. This is not surprising because it is simply another illustration of the larger unsettled question of the relation of the school to the church.

There is in the tradition a serious attempt to deal with the problem of the proper content and approach for the teaching of the Bible as an academic subject in the day school. Just a few years after the formal organization of the NUCS, a yearly convention was devoted to the theme of "The Bible and Christian Education." An article prepared by the Executive Committee of the Board of the Union set forth a suggested plan for correlating the activities of the various agencies in the teaching of the Bible. Deploring the tendency to duplicate activity and content in the Sunday school, the catechism class, and the Christian day school, the committee suggested a "proper division of labor." Basing its contention on the "diversified characters of the institutions themselves," it held that insofar as the Bible narrative is used in catechetical instruction, those Biblical passages should be selected which "lend themselves for indoctrinating the youth and which tend to prepare them for intelligent church membership" (NUCS Yearbook, 1925, p. 16).

They continued by suggesting "that the Sunday School . . . seek to develop the devotional phase of life." Thus "those passages of the Bible should

2. See Jan Waterink, *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1954, pp. 37ff. for a trenchant criticism of the attempt to base education on a specific text in the Bible.
3. T. Van Der Kooy, *The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1925, p. 55.
1. C. Jaarsma, in *American Calvinism: A Survey*, Baker Book House, 1957, p. 115.

5. Quoted from Bavinck's *Paedagogische Beginselen*, p. 18, in C. Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1935, p. 128.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

be selected which particularly bring out this phase of life." In distinction from Sunday school and the catechism class the day school "finds it chief objective in preparing the pupils for Christian participation in life in its most general aspects . . . it should be the task of the Christian day school to cover the Bible in a systematic way with special emphasis upon its application to the practical phases of life."[7]

At the same convention a minister held that the chief use of the Bible in the day school was simply inspirational. After giving an extensive survey of all the great writers, painters, artists, and statesmen who had been inspired to do great things by the Bible, he advocated that this aspect of the Bible be what the day school emphasize.[8]

Although there is probably no consistent practice in the system on this matter, there is in the theory a function for Bible in the curriculum which is consistent with both the loyalties and the specific aims of this school movement. While public education turns this way and that for a solution to the problem of how to separate the church and religion in education, how to take the Bible while not taking the church, this school system has available to it a possible solution. Its failure to be loyal to the Bible without being loyal to one denomination alone is only a failure to live up to its own theory and not a failure in the theory itself.

*The Bible and Other Subjects*

Much more could be said about the role of the Bible in the curriculum of this school, as well as about its role in the construction of educational theory, but in a limited paper such as this, space permits discussion of only one more concept. In any school system which attempts to incorporate the Bible into its curriculum, there arise at least two dangers, and each of these is a real threat to distinctiveness of the Calvinistic school movement. One danger is that when Bible is included as a course in the curriculum, it remains solely an *addition* without being integrated with any of the rest of the curriculum. This results in a dualism between religion and the rest of life, between Bible and the rest of the curriculum. Such a dualism may be said to obtain in the public school, where religion must be taken up as a separate social phenomenon which affects only the personal emotional life of the student. There has been a fear that this could be the fate of Bible studies in the Calvinistic school. One Christian educator pointed up the problem of integration when he said:

> I can conceive of a school being not a Christian school at all with a strong Bible Department in it, and I can conceive of a Christian school, being a very good one, too, without a Bible Department in it . . . . So my suggestion is that we try the program of integration, but that we integrate not around the Bible department or a Bible course, but around a philosophy that is thoroughly God-like, God-permeated in character.[9]

This emphasizes the point that it is not simply Bible study alongside study of other areas, but Bible study integrated with study of other areas that makes education Christian.

The second danger, fully as great, is that the Bible will dominate the curriculum in the sense that study in all areas of human knowledge is engaged in primarily for the purpose of illustrating and reinforcing the validity of Biblical truths rather than for seeking out new truths. This may be said to be the case in some Fundamentalist schools. Then literature becomes a series of illustrations of God's love, or man's sin, or the disastrous consequences of man's rejection of religion, and so forth. Scientific findings then are utilized for their ability to exhibit that the Bible after all does have accurate facts about the physical universe. In its extreme form this view of education holds that the Bible alone contains all the truth that man needs to know, and that the Christian engages in study only to reinforce this conviction.

The Calvinistic school system can succumb to neither of these temptations without losing its distinctiveness. It is firmly rooted in the Bible, but the kind of educational theory derived from the Bible and the kind of integration achieved between it and other areas of study will determine whether or not the school system remains consistent with its desire to be different not only from public education and parochial education, but also from Fundamentalist education. The proper integration of the Bible with the curriculum is not an easy matter, but the Calvinistic tradition of a general and special revelation as exemplified in the writings of Herman Bavinck offers a theoretical basis for such integration.[10] In this dual conception of revelation God is said to speak not only through His Word but also through the world, and each of these is a legitimate and valid source of truth about God and man. The single voice with which both are held to speak prevents the dualism between religion and other areas of study so typical of public education, and the distinction between them prevents the complete domination of the one over the other so typical of some Fundamentalist education. This view holds with John Henry Newman, the British educator of the last century, that "reli-

7. NUCS Yearbook, 1925, p. 16.

8. Rev. J. Althuis, "The Bible — A Source of Inspiration," NUCS Yearbook, 1925, p. 28.

9. H. Schultze, in *Record of Proceedings of Conference for Christian High School Principals*, 1949, p. 3. This Conference was sponsored by the NUCS and Calvin College.

10. For a brief exposition of this see C. Jaarsma, *Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck*, p. 62. For fuller treatment see Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1953.

gious truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge," and that science and religion in fruitful interaction produce that truth.

If space permitted, evidence could be gathered from the literature to show that both these dangers exist in the school system. Here I have given only what seemed to be the middle course demanded by at least one aspect of the tradition. While illustration of other ideas about the role of the Bible in the curriculum, as well as its general role in the formulation of educational theory, would be interesting, it would only serve to re-illustrate those cross-currents of thought in the school system which have been outlined in previous sections.

In summarizing this section it might be said that over the years there has been no lessening of the desire that the school be firmly rooted in the Bible. Although the influence of the church has fluctuated, and although the influence of the Netherlands has decreased, there is every indication that the Word remains as strong as ever in its influence on the movement. In spite of differing interpretations as to its best shape and form, this root of the school has remained sturdy and strong.

In a final article I shall discuss one other significant root of the Calvinistic school movement. This system has existed in American society for over fifty years, and the discussion will revolve about the extent to which this fact has shaped the school.

# The Genius of Reformed Church Polity

*by Elco H. Oostendorp*

WHEN we speak of the "genius" of Reformed church polity we mean the fundamental principle or determinative characteristic. Advocates of regional synods have argued that such synods are an expression of the genius of Reformed church polity. That argument is disputed by many in the Christian Reformed Church, and for some time I, too, found it unacceptable. But after a year and a half of study as a member of the Christian Reformed synodical committee appointed to draw up a plan for the introduction of regional synods, I have changed my mind. I am now convinced that while we have not been violating the genius of Reformed church polity in the past, continued failure to institute regional synods at the present stage of denominational development and in view of present dangers would constitute such a violation.

Our Church Order has always contained articles regulating regional synods. Quite naturally the small size of our denomination in its formative years made the introduction of a fourth assembly between classis and Synod inadvisable. But the ideal had a charm that would not be refused. There was a settled conviction on the part of many of those most interested in matters of polity that such synods ought to come into existence. It is very significant that the only argument that Synod ever used in delaying such organization was that the time was not ripe because the Church was as yet too small. This fact would seem a tacit concession to the argument that when regional synods became feasible principle would demand that they be formed.

However, such a conclusion might be considered to be too far-reaching and extreme. Not all leaders shared the conviction that such synods are of the very genius of our polity. Notably Prof. William Heyns, for many years professor of this subject in Calvin Seminary, was not convinced that they belong to our system *per se*. In his *Kybernetiek* he wrote: "It cannot be said that provincial synods necessarily belong to the synodical organization of the Reformed churches. Their place can be taken partly by the classes and partly by the general Synod, while the situation of a church is such that it is to her advantage so to do. But as soon as it appears that the profit of the churches requires the institution of particular synods, it will be time to call them into existence" (pp. 324-25, my translation).

Thus Heyns argues that the mere fact that they are mentioned by the Church Order does not demand them. Yet the third sentence in the above quotation also indicates that he favors them when their practical value and workability can be demonstrated. It is very doubtful whether if he were living today and could witness the size and complexity of our denominational organization this wise leader would oppose regional synods. His practical emphasis on the principle of "the profit of the churches" would seem rather to compel concession that the time has come to institute them.

* * * *

THE size of the denomination surely warrants a new set of assemblies between classes and Synod. Over five hundred congregations, and almost a

quarter of a million members, with continued rapid growth not only in Canada but also in many areas in the States, is ample warrant for the change. The only objection of weight in this connection may be the unequal distribution of our churches, and consequent disproportion in size of the regional synods. This is also true in other countries; meanwhile, in the majority of cases there is a very well-balanced division. But even more important than the geographic distribution of the church is the growth of the size of Synod and its committees. Regional synods as a basis of delegation offer a very equitable arrangement for cutting down the size of Synod. They will not only do this in a purely numerical way but in a representative way: at a lower level they will serve to spread the base of responsibility.

The most important fact of all, in the case for regional synods, is the growing complexity of our denominational machinery. At this point we ought to observe the church polity of the very large denominations of Methodists, Presbyterians, or Baptists. These denominations are run with a great deal of efficiency, but many of their methods are definitely contrary to the genius of Reformed church polity. The basic principle that the local church is autonomous and the equally basic tenet that major assemblies are deliberative are pushed into the background. There are two apparently opposite results that follow: on the one hand, centralization of power and executive action in small committees and permanent appointees at top levels, and on the other, increasing independent action and "congregationalism" at the level of the local church. The church becomes an efficiently run corporation in which the true nature of denominational unity (*het kerkverband*) is lost.

There are many indications that this trend is growing in our church too. Take the matter of quotas. There are not a few facts that show that our quota system has reached the end of its effective operation. It is not flexible enough to allow for the patent diversity of financial power of congregations different in size and location. Especially the problems of our Canadian churches are putting increasing strain on the established machinery.

It is not surprising that the Synod of 1958 reached an impasse when it considered quotas for Home Missions. During the post-war years of Canadian growth and expansion of our church extension program the General Committee for Home Missions did the denomination excellent service; its magnificent contributions have perhaps been much more criticized than appreciated. But the work became too great for the Committee, and at the last Synod the Committee was relieved of a very important part of its duties, namely, administration of the Fund for Needy Churches (hereafter, FNC).

This change by which a separate committee administers FNC was not made abruptly. It had been proposed already in 1953 by the study committee on re-alignment of mission work. In the tentative plan of the study committee on regional synods, sent to the classes and boards for evaluation, it was also suggested to transfer this work to a distinct committee. The Synod took its action after the matter had been studied by the Home Missions Committee and the permanent Budget Advisory Committee. Despite these facts I doubt whether this important change has been given much consideration on the consistorial and classical levels, and whether the church at large is sufficiently aware of its implications.

In making our recommendation as committee we gave as ground: "We believe there is no need for a representative committee since policy as to salary scale etc. is determined by General Synod and the distribution of funds is carefully controlled by classes and particular synods." This, however, is quite the opposite of the approach taken by the Synod. The Synod formed a new committee of three businessmen and two ministers. And this committee, presumably, is able to judge the needs of the churches concerned. The three masters of high finance — ministers are not supposed to know much about this mysterious field — are to be the watchdogs of Synod and see to it that the funds are administered in a businesslike manner, and especially that pressure is put on small churches that are not advancing rapidly enough toward self-support. One gets the impression that the Special Budget Advisory Committee pins its hopes for improvement on the presence of these "laymen." I quote: "The proper *implementation* of this rule, if adopted by Synod, is all important. Strongly 'urging' churches to become self-sufficient in the matter of salary payments is sterile in its effect. Only a 'fact-finding' Board able to interpret the 'Questionnaire,' along with an accompanying annual financial statement, will bring a stop to giving financial aid not warranted by congregational circumstances" (*Acts*, 1958, p. 404).

In all charity toward the brethren of the committee that made this judgment, I for one am alarmed by its implications. Here is "boardism" with a vengeance. It is time for those who love the genius of Reformed Church polity to cry "wolf." Is there not a much more excellent way? With all respect for the three men who are honored with the responsibility — and I have all personal regard for them — I suggest they are assuming an impossible task. How can perusal of even the most complete questionnaires and financial reports determine whether the good people in Peers, Alberta, or Allison, Iowa, have done their best? Obviously only personal contact and intimate knowledge of

conditions can be the basis of determining need. The FNC is for needy churches; and there is an element of charity that goes with its administration which cannot be taken care of in the impersonal spirit of a large bank or credit bureau.

To be sure, mere synodical "urgings" will have little effect. Where has the failure been? At the classical level. While it is true that helping needy churches is not properly Home Mission work, such help is most intimately connected with it. Our work of church extension, which results in the organization of many small churches, will never succeed unless these churches can get help during their infant years of struggle. The practice in most classes is that appeals for aid are processed in a hasty fashion in a committee meeting at the time Classis meets, but it is safe to say that few, if any, classical home mission committees take the time and trouble to meet with the consistories involved and carefully go over the needs. That is the thing that must be done and can be done. Synod can make the policy; classes must see that it is enforced in a spirit of firmness, but also of fairness.

In the decisions on this matter the classes are almost ignored. No, not entirely, but their role is minor as appears from the reference in point *f*, page 76. Point *g* puts all the stress on the FNC Committee. The phrase "in consultation with the classes concerned" makes the classes advisory, the Committee the final arbitrator.

* * * *

BUT where do regional synods enter into this picture? Limiting ourselves for the moment to the particular case of the FNC, they would again pass on applications for aid before these were forwarded to Synod through its administrative committee. If classes had done their duty there would not be much doubt on the part of the regional synods, but if they were not satisfied they would be close enough to the individual churches concerned to judge conditions. On the other hand, being considerably broader in constitution, a regional synod would be more objective and less subject to local pressures. Instead of taking refuge in a Board let us keep alive the genius of our polity and activate regional synods.

The fundamental principle of the relationship of the assemblies is expressed by the Church Order in Article 30 (Article 44 in the proposed revision): "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common." This must be linked to the principle which determines the nature of committees or delegated tasks. The new Article 46 states it well: "However, they [major assemblies] shall never transfer their authority to committees, since committees are not ecclesiastical assemblies, and all church governmental authority resides in the church assemblies only." Add these two principles, multiply the same by the growing complexity of our denominational organization, and the product is regional synods. That may be ministerial mathematics, but to me it seems to be the consistent application of the genius of Reformed Church polity!

# Willem Hendrik Frieling

*J. G. Vanden Bosch*

*O may I join the choir invisible*
*Of those immortal dead that live again*
*In minds made better by their presence.*

THUS sang a certain English poet during the nineteenth century. Could the nature of immortality be explained in more disappointing terms? If a man's immortality consists solely in being remembered by his fellowmen, man's future must be hopeless. Men soon forget even departed ones to whose lives they owe much. Those who live in the memory of men are only a very few of the outstanding figures of history such as a Caesar and a Napoleon, a Luther and a Calvin. Millions are mouldering in their graves in total oblivion. In church history we observe the same phenomenon. The founding fathers of the Christian Reformed Church are already forgotten by most of us, except by the few interested in its past. Who knows anything about Rev. K. Vanden Bosch, Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen, and Rev. D. J. Vander Werp? And who remembers the Reverend Willem Hendrik Frieling, the subject of our sketch, and who appreciates what this pioneer leader, and others, did for us?

Willem Hendrik Frieling was born in the year 1820 at Emmen in the province of Drenthe, The Netherlands. He had the good fortune of being the son of well-to-do parents, his father being the owner of a large farm and a man of parts, well thought of, as is shown by the fact that he was

assistant burgomaster of his community. This means that Willem Hendrik, the youngest of four children, enjoyed good schooling and was reared in a home where a modest degree of culture prevailed. Apparently his father was indifferent to the claims of Christianity, but his mother was a devout Christian who was not remiss in impressing upon her children the necessity of salvation. Being a boy of a sensitive religious nature, Willem Hendrik did not spurn a mother's warnings, but had impressions, which were reinforced by the striking conversion of a sister, who later came to America and became a Mrs. Zwiers of Zutphen, Michigan. Young as he was, he knew that he was a sinner, and he wrestled with the problem of his salvation from sin until the Lord used the warnings of an aged shepherd to bring him to the definite decision of committing himself to Christ as his Savior and Lord. At the early age of seventeen he became a confessing member of the *Hervormde Kerk*, the state church, which the family attended. When, however, the Reverend Hendrik De Cock, father of the Secession, began to proclaim the gospel of sovereign grace in his neighborhood and he fell under its influence, he no longer felt at ease in his own church and decided to join the new movement.

The desire to be a minister of the gospel soon took root in his soul. Making known his aspirations to Rev. H. De Cock, he received hearty encouragement and soon the decision to realize his ambition was reached. However, it seemed as if his hopes would be dashed to the ground, for at the last moment his father withdrew his proffered support. At this juncture, an affluent lady, a cousin, rescued him from frustration and most generously promised him the necessary financial assistance. But even then he did not immediately avail himself of the opportunity presenting itself, for he entertained at times doubt as to the genuineness of his conversion. Finally, in 1842, at the age of twenty-two, Frieling began his studies at the "Drentsche" school, conducted by Rev. W. A. Kok, who during Frieling's student days was assisted by a certain Rosenzweig, a converted Jew, with whose assistance the instruction was greatly improved. During the five years at this school, therefore, Frieling had the advantage of studying languages and other literary subjects as well as theology, which ever was the *piece de resistance* of the course. K. Vanden Bosch, R. Smit, and L. J. Hulst, who later migrated to America, and J. Bavinck, father of Dr. Herman Bavinck, were among his fellow students.

It required great courage on the part of young Frieling to prepare himself for the ministry in the group of churches he had joined. Discord was rampant. It verily seemed as if dissension among the leaders and the inability to settle their differences would result in the total failure of the movement. Disagreement as to church government tore apart those who belonged together. Failure to think alike in the matter of securing freedom of worship issued in a split which was not cemented until several years later. Whether children of parents who had not made confession of faith could be baptized was a subject that caused much heated controversy. The fact that men were ordained with but a semblance of training occasioned hot dispute. In so important a matter as the education of ministers there was disagreement, some favoring cooperation with conservatives in the state church, others being hostile to such a plan. Even so trivial a matter as the attire of a minister of the gospel wrought division of opinion and practice. A minister who had been a leader in the Secession was deposed. The darkest hour was reached when the Synod held in 1843 was stigmatized as a robbers Synod. In spite of the quarrels, frequently so vehement, in spite of the alienation of brethren, always so tragic, Frieling persisted in studying for the ministry, so firmly convinced was he of the rightness of the cause, even though the very classis that examined and admitted him to the ministry was a sort of rump meeting that traveled all night to a church in a neighboring place where the members were of one mind and were not molested. Undoubtedly, Frieling shared with nearly all Seceders the passionate conviction that after all they belonged together.

The young candidate was ordained in 1847 at Dalfsen to be the pastor of the church to which the Hulst family belonged. Here there was some factional division, but by means of his sound preaching and his astute leadership unity was soon restored. Deventer, Bedum, Sappemeer, and Burum, in the order named, next enjoyed his prophetic ministry. In all of them Frieling proved to be a peacemaker and a builder. For example, under his care Bedum grew to be a large and financially substantial congregation where he remained ten happy years. The caliber of the man was shown when he felt it to be his duty to bid farewell to his beloved Bedum for a much smaller church torn by dissension, which dissension, however, in an incredibly short time disappeared under his wise ministrations.

But there came an end to Rev. Frieling's labors in the homeland. In 1866, he received a call from the small church at Vriesland, Michigan. Not cherishing any love for America in his soul, he was greatly displeased and wished to decline the call and to remain at Burum in Dutch Friesland, but he could not dismiss the cry for help coming from his struggling co-religionists in the New World. It was not the hope of material gain that attracted this servant of God who was a man of some means and a pastor of large churches. Nor was it the

prospect of laboring in a much larger and more promising field, for the group in America numbered only thirteen churches, most of them being small and struggling. The need of the churches in America so gripped him that he must needs accept. Instead of gaining he would lose, but the prospect of sacrificing gain and outward advantages did not deter him. Thus it was that he decided to forego much that was precious in the Old World and to embark for the New. The observation has often been ventured that those who chose America for their new home were the bravest of the brave. Making allowance for those whose motive was sheer reckless adventure, we must concede that the observation contains much truth. Rev. Frieling was one of the bravest. Only two, Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen and Rev. D. J. Vander Werp had preceded him. Many refused to come because official opinion at home was hostile to the Christian Reformed churches in America.

Rev. Frieling's work at Vriesland was greatly blessed. The church edifice was enlarged twice and a parsonage was built. The rich crops reaped by the farmers of this fertile region were symbolical of harvests garnered spiritually. Numbering only twenty-seven families when he came, the congregation grew to a hundred and twenty. After five years of labor abundantly blessed, he left for Ridott, Illinois, a church composed of Germans with a Reformed background. Here he became so discouraged that he found fault with God's providential dealings and even toyed with the thought of returning to The Netherlands. The church at Ridott was in a deplorable state because his predecessor by his departure for another denomination and other unworthy conduct had unsettled the members and nearly wrecked the church. A serious illness resulted in a renewed consecration to the task at Ridott so that under Frieling's tactful guidance peace, unity, and loyalty were regained. The Bodes, Cornelius and Henry, were members of his flock and were tutored by him for a while when they contemplated studying for the ministry.

Next Graafschap, a church firmly established and one of the largest in its group, enjoyed his preaching and pastoral care for the space of four years. The rural peacefulness that Rev. Frieling so loved in this hamlet was rudely disturbed when First Muskegon, long vacant, sent him an urgent call which he felt obliged to heed. It is interesting to note that in the way of God's providence this was the third time he had been led to be the successor of the worthy Rev. D. J. Vander Werp, first at Burum, The Netherlands, then at Graafschap, and lastly at Muskegon. His incumbancy here of three years was terminated by an invitation from the church at Cincinnati, Ohio. His stay with this flock, a lonely outpost, ecclesiastically, near the Mason and Dixon line, was very brief. The death of a young and beloved daughter made it impossible for the grief-stricken parents to feel at home, so that after a pastorate of only a year and a half he moved to Grand Rapids to be the first pastor, upon invitation, of the newly organized church on Alpine Avenue.

In the rapidly growing area in the northwest corner of Grand Rapids there were indeed opportunities for doing a great work. The tide of immigration ran strong. Scores of immigrants came and joined the Christian Reformed denomination, a fact which is explained by the changed attitude of the Dutch churches caused by the Anti-Masonic agitation in this country and by the influence exerted by Rev. L. Rietdijk and Rev. R. T. Kuiper, our delegates to the synod of the Dutch churches in 1882. Being the first pastor of the church, Rev. Frieling laid the foundation upon which a strong and flourishing congregation was built. The phenomenal increase from fifty to a hundred and fifty families in four years made it necessary to erect a commodious church edifice. A new parsonage was also built.

Rev. Frieling had already spent nearly forty years in the sacred ministry. The infirmities of age were beginning to creep up on him and he knew that he was no longer able to shepherd so large a flock as was Alpine Avenue. He longed for a smaller church. A call from the rural parish at Lamont appealed to him, for here he would be able to serve his Master without overtaxing his powers. The four years spent in this picturesque spot on the Grand River were a time of recuperation. When, therefore, the opportunity presented itself of assuming the responsibilities of the larger field at Spring Lake, he was ready to go. But he was too sanguine. Illness and failing strength compelled him after a pastorate of only three years to ask for his emeritation. The eleven years still allotted to him he spent in Grand Rapids in the home of his oldest son, reading much, receiving visitors and friends, and enjoying the Christian fellowship of his former charge. He had not enjoyed his days of leisure long when his wife died with whom he had lived in a blessed wedlock more than fifty years. Their union was enriched with four children, two sons and two daughters.

Lacking three years, Rev. Frieling had spent a half century in the active ministry, nineteen years in Holland and twenty-eight in America. Since he was a man of experience and had the reputation of being an effective preacher, we do not wonder that Classis upon his arrival officially welcomed him with deep joy. His coming was a real accession; expectation ran high and he was no disappointment. As we review his career in this country, we are impressed with at least two things.

One of these is his loyalty to his denomination. Never did he waver in his allegiance as some did and prove to be a renegade. Zealously did he serve his own denominational group and seek to promote its well-being, organizing new churches such as First Chicago, now Berwyn, Ackley, and perhaps still others; presiding over four general assemblies, now called synods; being curator of the Theological School; and acting as a member of a committee to draw up the General Regulations, *Algemeene Bepalingen,* adopted in 1881.

Another feature that we notice is that Rev. Frieling was pre-eminently a preacher and a pastor. He was not considered, as far as the records show, as a candidate for the professorship in the school to be organized, or for the editorship of *De Wachter* when this paper was launched. His fame does not rest upon authorship of any kind. He was primarily one who proclaimed the Reformed faith, one who preached the gospel of free and sovereig grace. The writer of this sketch has often hear his parents laud in glowing terms Rev. Frieling' ability as a pulpiteer. Not for the erection o church edifices and parsonages except as these were evidences of growth and harmony in the congregations served, but for the conversion o sinners, the edification of the saints, the founding of new churches, and the strengthening of existing ones which the small group greatly needed should Rev. Frieling be gratefully remembered. Such work is of fundamental importance in the church of Jesus Christ. To have wrought valiantly in these is great honor. From the heart Rev. Frieling would have echoed the words of Paul once written to the Thessalonian Christians: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

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*Book Review*

# CHRISTIANITY AND CLASSICAL CULTURE

*Christianity and Classical Culture, A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine,* by Charles Norris Cochrane, New York: Oxford University Press, 1957; pp. xii, 533, index. (Galaxy Book, $2.95)

*Reviewed by* JESSE DEBOER, *Professor of Philosophy,* University of Kentucky.

I have read this book three or four times, and some parts of it more often, since first procuring a copy in 1949. It fully satisfies one of my criteria for an important book, namely, that it should go on being instructive with repeated use. The jacket on my copy carried the following sentence by W. H. Auden. "Since the appearance of the first edition in 1940, I have read this book many times, and my conviction of its importance to the understanding not only of the epoch with which it is concerned, but also of our own, has increased with each rereading." The excellence of this volume as a study of the ancient period arises partly from the author's remarkable grasp on the issues of our era. One mark of a good historian is the ability to pick out the most important features of an earlier age in virtue of a rich experience of his own time. This book is altogether unusual as an intelligent interpretation to the present century of the critical period from Augustus to Augustine.

Professor Cochrane's preface was written at Oxford in July, 1939, on the eve of the Second World War. The book was published in 1940 by the Clarendon Press. In 1944 it was reprinted by the Oxford University Press, with the text revised and corrected. Now it has been reissued by the same Press as one of its series of Galaxy Books.

Professor Cochrane does a magnificent job of work in interpreting the political and reflective developments during about five hundred years, from the highest point of imperial culture under the leadership of Augustus to the collapse of the Western Empire. The book has three parts. Part I (Reconstruction) presents a study of pagan thought and practice in the early Empire, from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius and Diocletian; during this time Christians have little influence on public affairs. Part II (Renovation) treats the period from Constantine to Theodosius, during which most of the emperors (Julian is a fascinating exception) submit to the power of the church but strive to use the new religion as a prop to the old pagan conception of the state. Part III (Regeneration) is an extended and thorough exposition of the work of the great Christian leaders directly after Nicea, of whom the chief was Augustine. To him the author devotes the final one hundred and forty pages. These pages, plus the earlier pages in Part III on Athanasius and Ambrose, make up the best brief interpretation of early mature Christian thought to have appeared during this century in English. They have special value because they show how the Christians differed from and criticized the finest classical thinking on all major topics of human concern.

In place of reviewing the book, which cannot be done in a short space, I shall try to encourage readers of the *Journal* to take it up and study it. I begin with suggesting a good way to start using it. We all know that there are a number of topics that were important in the thought of both the classical writers and the early Christians. I suggest beginning with inspection of the index which, though short, is remarkably useful. Under the entry for *history* there are sub-entries on the theories of history offered by Sallust, Livy, Herodotus, and Thucydides; on the cyclical theory and on the Christian conception. The entry for *idealism* makes references to discussions that merit close and repeated study. Under *Virgil* there are sub-entries on his philosophy of history and his theology. The entry for the *Arian controversy* will lead a reader to extremely profitable discussion of one way in which

Christian thought was endangered by the intrusion of classical assumptions. The entries on *Plato*, *Platonism*, and *Aristotle* will clarify the bedrock issues in the controversy between classicism and Christianity. Similarly with such entries as *cosmology*, *matter*, *Gnosticism*, *time*, *progress*, *sin*, and *man*. For anyone interested in problems of education, I recommend the entries for *education* and *classical studies* and the sub-entry on education under *Augustine*. The section on the Emperor Julian's educational program is important both because it exhibits what Platonism was like when applied to practical affairs and because it provides matter for serious reflection by Christians on the aims and methods of Christian education. It is quite likely that many Christian teachers could discover that their own program, owing to obscurity of thought about the power of reason and the logical nature of the truths of faith, is akin to Julian's and that their objections to Julian rebound on themselves. This leads me to recommend, as a final item, the discussions noticed under the entry *faith and reason*. These are extremely rich.

I wish now to indicate how I think the book has benefited me. It displays and diagrams the large continuity of outlook through all the departments of thought and practice in the classical era; and it shows that this continuity was owing to a consistent application of specific non-Christian principles. It is fascinating to observe, for instance, how Julian's instructions to teachers accord with recommendations of Plato, how the Aristotelian conception of the catharsis of tragedy was used to justify the imperial arrangements for the provision of stage plays, and how the Platonic dogma of the eternity and independence of matter entered into the classical tendency to suppose that human reason and the divine life are qualitatively alike, into the classical explanation of human greatness as a conjunction of virtue and fortune, into the classical failure to grasp the unity of personality, and into a religious outlook that despaired of history and induced a longing for escape from the problems of this temporal life. Christians had to work out a teaching that was equally consistent in all regions of life, and one that was radically distinctive. Among the outstanding early Christian thinkers, the most thorough and finished was Augustine. I am not convinced, nor does Cochrane claim, that Augustine completed the task which he so clearly saw. Modern western culture, I think, is still troubled because it has not achieved clarity on the radically new principle bequeathed to it through the Scriptures. In my judgment, we moderns have not yet fully grasped the notion of the unity of the self (the one key notion in Augustine's mind at the moment of his turning from classicism to Christ) or the conception of the goodness of the material, changing creation, including matter itself. I very much doubt whether Christians today fully realize the significance of the doctrine of creation for our attitude toward the body, and in particular the aspect of sexuality. On this topic Augustine, I think, never quite managed to make his various statements agree; and we have inherited through traditional moral theology the effects of his imperfectly Christian attitudes, that is, of his relapses into the classical mode.

Another personal debt is what I owe to the stimulation of the book to reflection on the roles of faith and reason (that perennial problem for any student of philosophy who stands within a religious tradition). It is instructive to study Cochrane's treatment of the work done on this problem by the early Christians. It is plain that he is sympathetic to the Christian attack on classical culture. It is also plain that he is thoroughly skilled in phrasing the intellectual questions rising in the minds of the first Christian philosophers when they faced the enormous achievements of Plato and Aristotle. How were they to define reason and faith and diagram their interplay? Cochrane offers magnificent exposition; but to my mind his defense of the Christians is a bit too strong to fit the logical nature of the situation. He even stretches the sense of the word "heresy" so far as to apply it to Plato's two-worlds scheme. It is sufficient, I should think, to show that Platonism is a rational product only in the sense

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that it is worked out in a certain logical style (that is, as an organized body of theory exhibiting a fit with specified rules of reasoning), and to add the more important point that the driving force behind the elaboration according to the rules of the art is itself a religious conviction. Plato adopts a religious stand; his technically competent exposition and elaboration is reason's service to this stand. Christians have a different religious stand; when they elaborate their views systematically, following the same rules of art, they too are doing the work of reason. (The world is in debt to the Greeks, not for their sciences chiefly or their world pictures, but for their discovery of the rules for theorizing.) It is not necessary (and I think that it is rather like bluffing) to argue that Christian teaching is more intelligent than Platonism: the first step is a step of faith, and as Augustine says so simply, quoting Paul, "We walk by faith and not by sight." Perhaps one can argue that what the Christian *believes* is more fit to be *believed in* than is what Plato *believes*. The God worshipped by Christians, I am inclined to say, is such that He can be approached only by faith at its fullest stretch. "Though He slay me . . . ." Tertullian was not merely deluded or naive. But it would be queer to commend Christianity to reason on this ground. Christians will be doing about all it is possible for them to do if they show that Platonists (or Marxists, or whatever others it becomes important to talk with and about) themselves introduce their systems with some logical equivalent to the words, "I believe," and if they do a thorough job of expounding the content of their own faith and of living by its prescriptions (this last especially). Faith is not something we produce, it is a gift.

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